



CODE INFORMATION SHEET

SECONDARY MEANS OF ESCAPE

Updated January, 2011

The saying, "Always have two ways out" is especially true when it comes to home fires. When the basement stairs are blocked, or fire and thick, black smoke is racing down a hallway toward a dead-end bedroom, windows that are large enough for you to escape - and for firefighters to enter - become essential lifesaving equipment. These all-important secondary means of escape are called egress windows.

Few of us think of windows as lifesaving equipment - but they are! When you need to escape a house fire or other disaster, or when rescue personnel need to enter - the right size egress window can make the difference between life and death.

The net clear opening of the window refers to the actual free and clear space that exists when the window is open. It is not the rough opening size or the glass panel size or any other size, but the actual opening a person can crawl through. The Code requires the opening large enough so firefighters can crawl through the window in full protective gear with an air tank on their back.

The code requires that every sleeping room, living area or school classroom must be provided with a secondary means of escape. That means at least one operable window or exterior door approved for emergency egress or rescue.

Selecting a new egress window doesn't need to be intimidating. Window manufacturers have many options and list the clear opening of their windows in their catalogs, and whether they meet egress requirements.

Code Definitions:

Living Area – Any normally occupiable space in a residential occupancy, other than sleeping rooms, bathrooms, toilet compartments, kitchens, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces.



Use the worksheet on the back of this sheet to determine whether your window meets the requirements for second means of escape.

Requirements of the VERMONT FIRE & BUILDING SAFETY CODE

Secondary Means of Escape. NFPA 101 Section 24.2.2.3

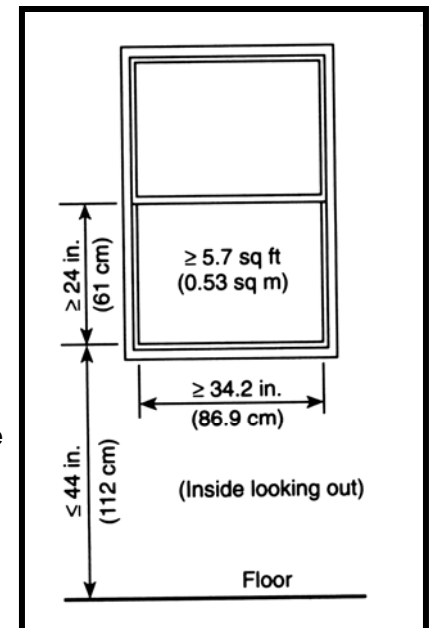
The secondary means of escape shall be an outside window or door operable from the inside without the use of tools, keys, or special effort and shall provide a clear opening of not less than 5.7 sq. ft. for New Windows and no smaller than 5.0 sq. ft. for Existing Windows . The width shall be not less than 20 in. (51 cm), and the height shall be not less than 24 in. (61 cm). The bottom of the opening shall be not more than 44 in. (112 cm) above the floor.

Note} a window opening that's the bare minimum of 24 in. high and 20 in. wide does not meet the egress requirements, since its net clear opening is only 3.33 sq. ft. A window must be taller and/or wider than these minimums to meet the 5.7-sq.-ft.-opening requirement.

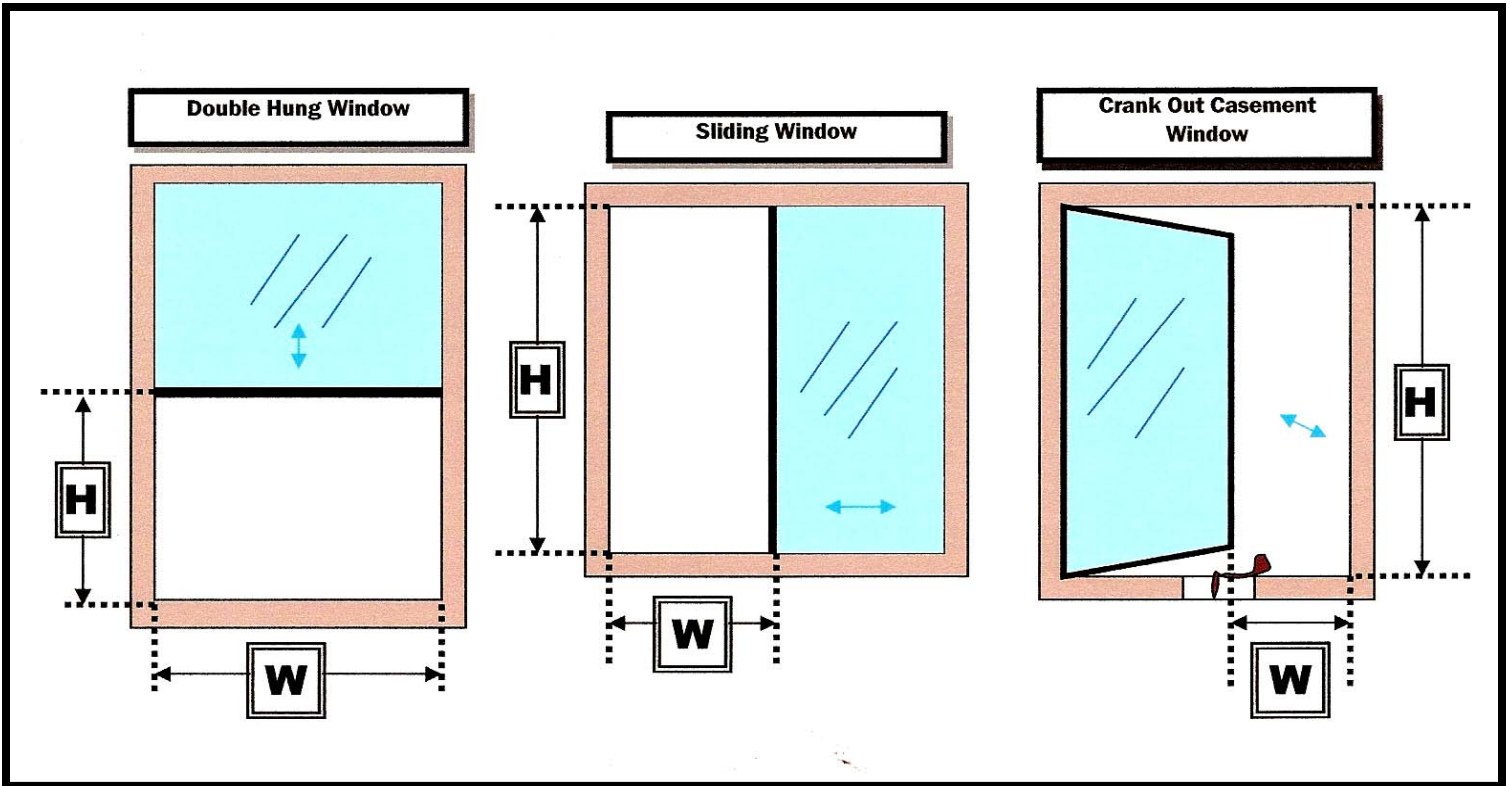
NFPA 101 Section 24.2.2.3.3

Such means of escape shall be acceptable where one of the following criteria are met:

- (1) The window shall be within 20 ft (6.1 m) of grade.
- (2) The window shall be directly accessible to fire department rescue apparatus as approved by the authority having jurisdiction.
- (3) The window or door shall open onto an exterior balcony.



Secondary Means of Escape Window Worksheet



1. Measure the openable height [H] _____ " Is the clear openable height at least 24" ? Yes [] No []
2. Measure the openable width [W] _____ " Is the clear openable width at least 20" ? Yes [] No []
3. Check opening area [H] _____ X [W] _____ = _____ / 144 = _____ sq ft
4. Measure from the lower sill to finished floor _____ " Is the it 44' or less ? Yes [] No []
5. Measure from the sill to outside ground level _____ " Is the it 20 feet or less ? Yes [] No []

Location	Height	X	Width	=	Total square in.
Bedroom #1					
Bedroom #2					
Bedroom #3					
Bedroom #4					
Living Area					
Family Room					
Other Room 1					
Other Room2					
Basement Room					

This sheet is designed to promote fire prevention, code compliance and to enhance the public safety of all Vermonters. This sheet provides a detailed overview of one common issue and is not an all-inclusive list of state laws or additional code requirements that may apply. For additional information or details you should contact an Asst. State Fire Marshal in your regional office of the Division of Fire Safety. This sheet was developed as an educational resource with information provided from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Division of Fire Safety Regional Offices

Barre 802-479-4434 * Rutland 802-786-5867 * Springfield 802-885-8883 * Williston 802-879-2300

www.vtfiresafety.org